Respiratory Illnesses

MARCH 1, 2024

CDC's website is being modified to comply with President Trump's Executive Orders.

Taking Steps for Cleaner Air for Respiratory Virus Prevention

WHAT TO KNOW

- Taking steps for cleaner air is a core prevention strategy to lower risk from respiratory viruses.
- Core prevention strategies are important steps you can take to protect yourself and others from respiratory viruses.

Recommendation

Lower your risk for getting a respiratory illness by taking steps to improve air quality.

Steps for cleaner air

Take steps for cleaner air. This can mean bringing in fresh outside air, purifying indoor air, or gathering outdoors. Virus particles do not build up in the air outdoors as much as they do indoors.

How it works

Some germs spread in the air between people. This happens more easily in indoor, crowded spaces with poor airflow. To reduce the risk of exposure, it helps to improve air quality by increasing airflow, cleaning the air, or opting to gather outdoors.

Steps you can take

Individuals can

- Bring as much fresh air into your home as possible by opening doors and windows and/or using exhaust fans.
- If your home has a central heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system (HVAC, a system with air ducts that go throughout the home) that has a filter, set the fan to the "on" position instead of "auto" when you have visitors and use pleated filters. Change your filter every three months or according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Use a portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) cleaner.
- Move activities outdoors, where airflow is best.

Organizations can

- Ensure existing HVAC systems are providing at least the minimum outdoor air ventilation requirement in accordance with ventilation design codes. Applicable codes are based on the year of building construction or latest renovation and intended building occupancy.
- Aim for 5 or more air changes per hour (ACH) of clean air. This can be achieved through any combination of central ventilation system, natural ventilation, or additional devices that provide equivalent ACH to your existing ventilation.

Key times for prevention

All of the prevention strategies described in this guidance can be helpful to reduce risk. They are especially helpful when:

- Respiratory viruses are causing a lot of illness in your community.
- You or the people around you were recently exposed to a respiratory virus, are sick, or are recovering.
- You or the people around you have risk factors for severe illness.

Notice

CDC offers separate, specific guidance for healthcare settings (COVID-19, flu, and general infection prevention and control). Federal civil rights laws may require reasonable modifications or reasonable accommodations in various circumstances. Nothing in this guidance is intended to detract from or supersede those laws.

SOURCES

CONTENT SOURCE:

National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD)